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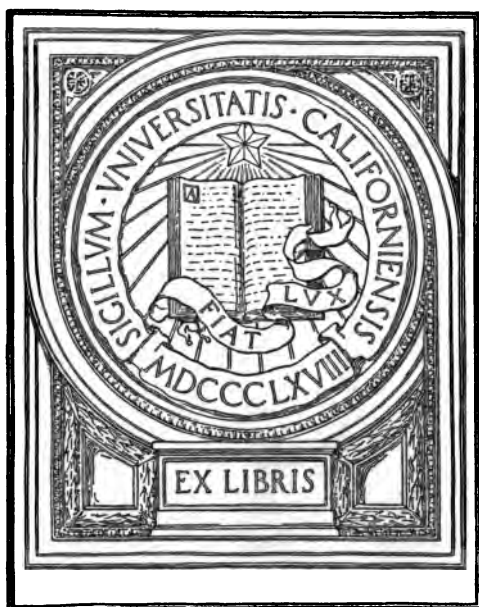
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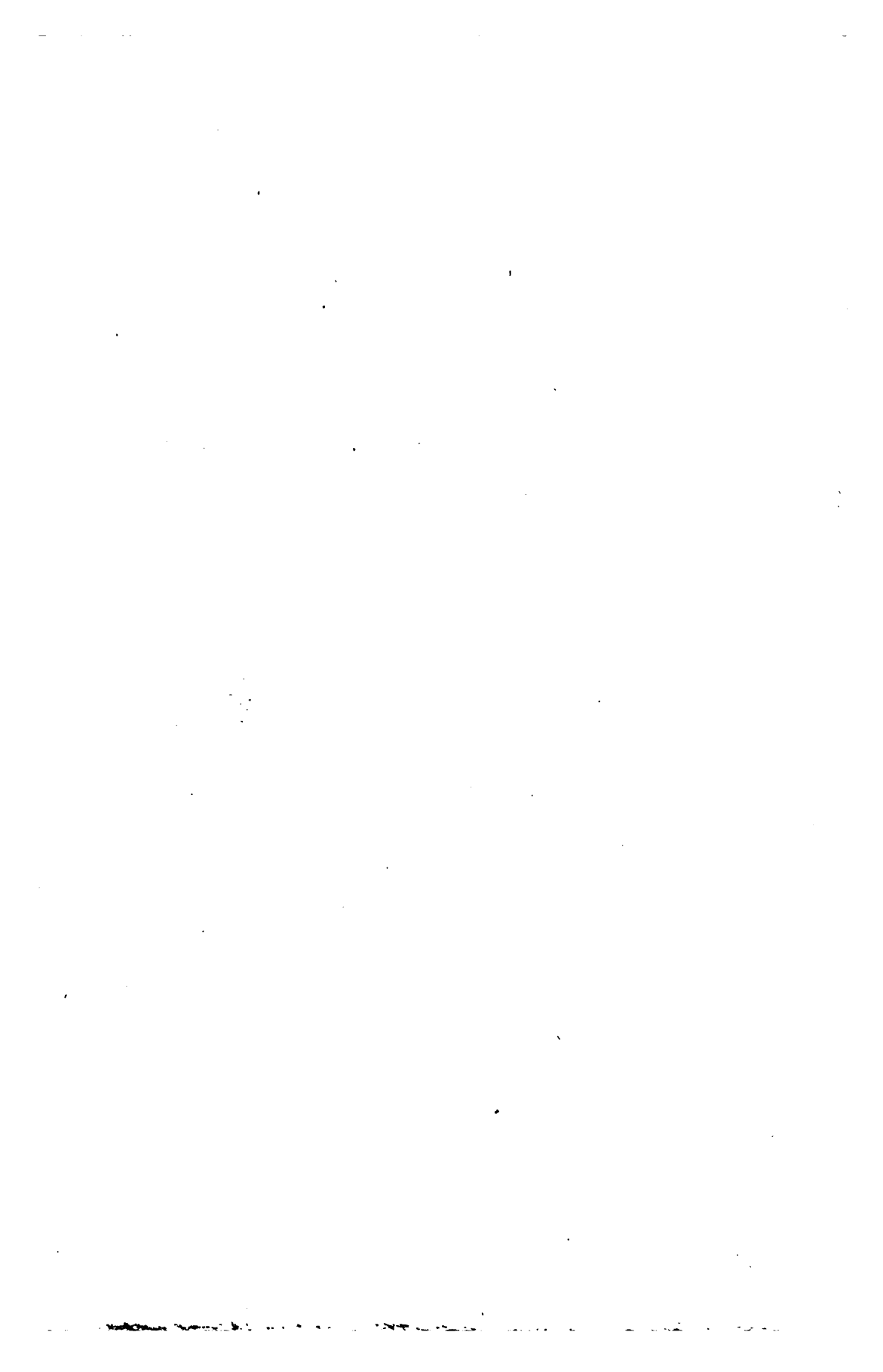
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A Gracious Visitation

WRITTEN BY

EMMA FRANCES DAWSON
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WITH AN APPRECIATION BY

AMBROSE BIERCE



THE BOOK CLUB OF
CALIFORNIA

SAN FRANCISCO:

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EMMA FRANCES DAWSON

BY AMBROSE BIERCE

IN nearly all of Miss Dawson's work that I have seen is an elusive something defying analysis, even description—something that is not in the words. I do not know how she gets it where it is; I never could either surprise her secret by swift strokes of attention, come upon it by patient still-hunting, nor in any way get at the trick of it. I can name it only in metaphor as a light behind the words; a light like that of Poe's "red litten eyes"; a light such as falls at sunset upon desolate marshes, tingeing the plumage of the tall heron and prophesying the joyless laugh of the loon. That selfsame light shines somewhere through and under Dore's long parallel cloud-bands along his horizons, and I have seen it, with an added bleakness, backgrounding the tall rood in the Lone Mountain cemetery of San Francisco. I dare say it is all very easy—to Miss Dawson: she simply writes and some "remote, unfriended, melancholy" ancestor stands by to "do the rest."

The scene of all Miss Dawson's stories is San Francisco—her San Francisco—San Francisco as she sees it from her eyrie atop of "Russian Hill." To her it is

a dream city—a city of wraiths and things forbidden to the senses—of half-heard whispers from tombs of men long dead and damned—of winds that sing dirges, clouds that are signs and portents, fogs peopled with fantastic existences pranking like mad, as is the habit of all sea-folk on shore leave—a city where it is never morning, where the birds never sing, where children are unknown, and where at night the street-lights at the summits of the hills “flare as if out of the sky,” signalling mysterious messages from another world. In short, this sister to Hugo has breathed into the gross material San Francisco so strange a soul that to him who has read her book the name of the town must henceforth have a meaning that never before attached to any word of human speech. Wherefore I say of this book that it is a work of supreme genius; and I try to have faith to believe that whatever else may befall it, while the language in which it is written remains intelligible to men it will not fail to challenge the attention and engage the interest of the judicious.*

To those who have feared the effect upon Miss Dawson’s powers of time, sorrow, privation and hope deferred, it is a joy to note that her latest and longest story, “A Gracious Visitation”—the one written es-

* “An Itinerant House and Other Stories” published by William Doxey in 1897.

pecially for this volume, the others being from twenty to thirty years old—is the best. It is indeed a marvelous creation, and I know of nothing in literature having a sufficient resemblance to it to serve as a basis of comparison. In point of mere originality, I should say it is unsurpassed and unsurpassable; the ability to figure to oneself a story more novel and striking would, in a writer, imply the ability to write one—which I think the most capable writer would be slowest to claim.

[1897]

*ALL those strange things and secret
decrees and unrevealed transactions,
which are above the clouds and far
beyond the regions of the stars shall
combine in ministry.*

—Jeremy Taylor.

*WHO sleeps on graves, rises mad or
a poet.*

—Tzigane Proverb.

A GRACIOUS VISITATION

♣ BY EMMA FRANCES DAWSON ♣



The first time so faint and far that I could not tell it from the hauntings of the inner ear known to all musicians, the chance strains evoked for me by the differing keys of the fog signals.

I lived in a region of remote sounds. On Russian Hill I looked down as from a balloon; all there is of the stir of the city comes in distant bells and whistles, changing their sound, just as the scenery moves, according to the state of the atmosphere. The islands shift as if enchanted, now near and plain, then removed and dim. The bay widening, sapphire blue, or narrowing, green and gray, or, before a storm, like quicksilver. The hills over the water drawing close, green or snowy, showing whether their buildings miles away are of brick or wood, or all is thrust into blue distance, or brushed away, a bank of fog looking as if the world reached no farther. The city lights twinkling of long lines of romances or hidden by the gray slides that shut off all in life but the wails

of warning to the sailors. Great heat spreading stretches, as of piles of white wool upon the water. Sharp edges everywhere bringing the city huddling into itself, as in fear of the coming storm. It is like having *genii* for companions, so picturesque and constantly varying are the alternate movement and exchange of currents from the sea of air and the sea of water, tremendous forces of life, showing me personality, pulse and arteries, as traced by Maury, who even suggests for the ocean a heart—the equator. Their companionship enlarges and enriches the mind, the air uplifting with its symbolic effects, the sea responding to movements of far-off worlds, and a highway for distant nations.

I watched not only our steamers and ferry-boats and yacht-races, like a flock of white birds hovering over the blue, but Arctic whaler, South Sea trader, Mexican, Chilean, and Peruvian coaster, Chinese junk, Australian and Japanese merchantmen, Malay *prahu*, double-decker, corvette, frigate, men-of-war under all flags.

Never again my husband's ship, never again!

To have my house full of *curios* he had brought from long voyages, and to be able to always look at the shipping on the water, was some comfort

for the sore heart that sought loneliness as a wounded animal hides. At first there were long, wakeful nights, when I sat in my window, till the harbor signal-lights grew like dear friends. Gradual healing came, in the stillness which makes the town, although within stone's throw below, seem yet unbuilt; on the pure blasts from mid-ocean spaces where none have breathed; in the gorgeous sunsets that give the meanest Cinderella the freedom of fairy cities; in never-to-be-forgotten clouds effects, as when the aerial sea hints knowledge of ocean depths, showing mackerel spots or the Pope's signet, once, a perfect skeleton of a whale, and, before a tempest, a gigantic, livid hand, with its Saturn finger torn out, pointed long toward the Golden Gate as if calling up a gale, or signalling its coming from thousands of miles at sea. Often the whole sky was of such terrific import that I feared Michellet's waves, like a mob of eyeless, earless beasts, foaming at the mouth, demanding universal death, suppression of the earth, and return to chaos; but I learned that a dread menace of the sky may mean nothing here, ending in dire effects on distant waters. I had no longer to fear for my husband's ship. I could enjoy seeing a storm

sweep in, slowly blotting Gate, Presidio, Tamalpais, and Angel Island, in my view hours before its descent upon the eastern side of the town; or black clouds as of thunder over Tamalpais fringe into trailing wreaths like smoke that blow inland, shaking loose rafter and blind, and rattling door-lock; or hearing a gale beating doors and windows, threatening down the chimney, straining to lift the whole house, and shrieking in wrath about it.

All this made the busy streets very dull. Born with a sort of temperamental *basheesh* in my veins which makes a book affect like a whirlwind, a picture soothe as manna from Heaven, a piece of music seem crushing disaster, I lived in exciting times, as if always looking on at the opera of the Flying Dutchman. This led to my rhyming about one of its airs.

SPINNING SONG

Wagner-Listz

I turn the wheel of thrumming whirl,
Hear tread of life and love and hate.
I burn, I feel through humming stir
The thread is rife with grief and fate.
Witch-cat light purring, purring light,
Breathe of high wind by wizard sold,

White horses' flight in rushing might
By lashing blast alone controlled.

Yo-ho-ho-ho! Yo-ho-ho-ho!

Far sailor-cries float, dinning long,
Blend billowy, fray in thinning throng,
I thrill, I play the spinning song.

Twirl, wheel, whose magic moan and drone
Shades golden hope with tint of gloom.
Whirl, wheel, whose tragic monotone
Braids holden scope with hint of doom.
The wheel—the wheel—the wheel—the wheel—
Dream-spinner moving to and fro—
Night hours reveal a plunging keel
Where rolling gale and breakers blow.

Yo-ho-ho-ho! Yo-ho-ho-ho!

Far sailor-cries float, dinning long,
Veer billowy, stray in thinning throng.
Sheer thrill, I play the spinning song.

Roll, fashion murmur, in thy gyre,
Of seashells' muffling, that is yet
Dole, passion, all the world's desire,
Brief foam-bells ruffling our veins' fret.
Glide, slurring, slurring wheel, go round,
Mock cordage-wail of fated sail

Make blurring, blurring of a sound
As if all frail hearts did bewail.

Yo-ho-ho-ho! Yo-ho-ho-ho!

Far sailor-cries float, dinning long,
Blown billowy, spray in thinning throng.
I thrill, I play the spinning song.

In vain my friends, toiling up to see me, urged me to move, saying it was not safe for me to live there alone. I never felt lonely. If not playing or reading, I had my reveries. In these, since living here, the same scenes came again and again, as if people sitting by me had always the same thoughts which I grew to know, as my husband and I from long companionship read each other's minds. I saw granite quays, a vast city of miles of straight lines, utterly flat; against its pale sky minarets and domes of pink and gray, as of great Babylon blushing into view through the mist of time. Was I looking through telescope at a dead world, or was this an immense, vague, dreary marsh? A bog, snow-weighted alders and willows here and there, and endless rows of stakes along a plank-road. Big moose with branching antlers, wolves shaggy and dark, outlined against a moon-lit horizon. Black troops of ravens and

crows, blown, upset, borne off helpless in zigzag trailing through sheets of storm like a fall of white fox fur. High terraces of birch and maple lengthening into scattered pines, and yet fewer firs; then the silence of centuries felt under the copper moon, beside the rivers of molten silver of a polar night. Sledge, barge, caravan. A lonely ship becalmed upon her tremulous reflection countless fathoms below, white upon the darkness of night, with stars glancing amid the rigging. A vessel rolling with slanting spar and swelling canvas, flying through the foam of a wild wash leaping windward. A knot of sailor-faces, lowering and heavily lined, swaying with the bound of the ship and showing by fitful light of a swinging lamp below deck. An island with tufted tree-tops, and beach so white as to dazzle.



The second time I heard it with quick remembrance. An old French sea-song which Richépin calls that master-piece of an unknown, a revelation of man and high soul-tides; the words are few, the notes but five, the refrain only *traderi*

tra lanlaire et trouloula, yet, as he says, all the sea, the breath of space, cries from wrecks, the mirth and the terror of the sailor's hard life are there, and heard at sunset it has the melancholy grandeur of an evocation of Night. How often my husband and I had together listened to it, the favorite chantey of a French sailor who voyaged with him for years! Ah! that very day the Russian priest had read in my face a famished heart.

Looking down upon the Latin Quarter, with its rows of prim Boston houses, its Mexican corner-stores, its French tiny conservatory-fronts, the buildings showing the mingling of foreign elements in its people, "the characteristic Russian fleck of gold upon green" shows the Greek church. I liked to go there sometimes, for the reverent attitude of a standing congregation, the priests in picturesque hats and brocade robes, upon carpets spread for them, the swinging censers, burning tapers, and chanting of the stately music of the fifteenth century, allowing neither voice of organ nor of woman. Here I listened to a relic of days of hiding in catacombs, the thrilling Greater Compline, with its striking effect of choirs upon opposite sides bandying like a ball four exultant words. The choirs alternate

through twenty-six phrases, all ending in "God is with us!" which is at last sung by the united voices. It is like hearing the earnest prophet Isaiah himself, for his are the words. Thus I came to know one of the priests, a stately old man whose look was that of a human-faced bull of Nineveh. I like to think I had a share in what Aivasovsky painted, that arrival of relief from America to the famine-stricken Riazan. By hard work I was able to collect a large sum for that fund. When, on this day, I gave it to the priest he said, after thanking me :

"You have a sad face, Mrs. Trevelyan. Few of us get through this battle of life unscarred. I have known so many, so many of the wounded. To those who live here for years it is a city of haunted corners, haunted not only by our own old footsteps and hopes that rose and fell to their beat, but by knowledge that here was a suicide, there a murder, hither and yon the vague "found dead." You look like a Russian friend of years ago. It is one of those chance resemblances of face, or figure, or voice, that are so strange — so sweet — so sad. For life has its haunted corners, too, with their own tragedies. Bitter is a famine of the heart! I shall pray for your peace."

His lofty, Mithraic head-gear did not mar the remains of romantic blond beauty. As I looked at him I wondered what heart-break he had known or caused. He gave me a costly *icon*, the Madonna and Child with gold-winged angels round them, all the faces finely painted on porcelain and silver arabesques hiding the figures.

On my way home I went on the green hill-top. All the southern portion of the city was shrouded in smoke, it towered above in the Afrite columns of the Arabian Nights, it spread low like a tumultuous ocean, no more of the town in sight than as if the Last Hour had long been burning it. Against the east side of the Swedenborgian minister's hermitage a tall clump of scarlet passion-flowers added its solemn legend to the scene. It was a purple and white one I had known running over the door of my eastern home. The crown of thorns, sponge, scourge, nails, and five wounds in this bloody guise cast a weird gloom as if I had met the Witch of Endor. Grave and tired I turned homeward. The owner of a fine house near had gone abroad, the care-taker, a sad woman who had known better days, stood at the gate as I passed.

"I hate to go in!" said she. "The house looks

bigger and darker and more lonesome every night! How strange it is that you are never afraid! There has been so much crime here lately, too."

I said some cheering words to her. When I reached my house I looked back; she still stood there. I thought I would go over later and keep her company a while.

Alone, thinking of her, of the starving Russians, and of the priest's words, an old "charm" came into my mind, and set me to rhyming an appeal, not for myself alone, though worded so, but meant as for all stricken and despairing.

THE RUNE OF THE HEALING

Come! forces of an ancient "healing charm,"
Begged of soft heart and lofty soul its balm.

Deeper than plummetts fall
It has no limitary,
In height or breadth no thrall:
Help! by the heart of Mary!
Help! by the soul of Paul!

Aid, O, brave mother-heart, full heart of Mary,
For one decree we know:
"A sword shall pierce through thine own soul!" Nor vary
Our souls, white shields, all show

Like pure Sir Galahad's—
A red cross come and go.

Rossini's *Inflammatus*, wild appealing,
Breathes, fitly, pathos, passion, depth of feeling,
In keen, uplifting ecstasy revealing
My heart inflamed for thee,
Thy heart aglow for me!

Hear both mild reed, bluff brass, imploring, soaring,
"I weep! I weep! I weep!"
Ineffable the agony adoring,
Sigh upon sigh doth leap,
Grief rippling eddy spreads,
The strings in shudder keep.
"Because unloved, unloved, goes Love, so tender!"
Let me be one with thee, Great Heart—surrender—
Melt into thee—there let me glide—Befriender!
The music-tide at neap—
While—in—I—trembling—creep!

Kind Powers of overwhelming awe and might!
Immortal allies against mortal plight!
The ages cannot pall
Confiding tributary
That cries when ills befall:

Help! by the heart of Mary!
Help! by the soul of Paul!

Aid me, high soul of Paul, illuminating
 The way through dark and mire.
Soul of Initiate, irradiating
 Cheer from Eternal Fire.
 Like pure Sir Galahad's,
 Thy strength can never tire.
Thou great Intelligences close beholding,
Thine things unseen, and the unknown, unfolding
All mysteries that life and death are moulding,
 To thee naught can be dire,
 Thy fervor I desire.

Of vast depths open to thy thought's entreating
 What daring hints are thine,
Impassioned mystic! "Grace and peace" thy greeting,
 For to thy wisdom fine
 Move with commingling threads
 The earthly and divine.
Thy meditation as a planet beaming,
Thy intuition like a meteor streaming,
Thy revelation light from Heaven gleaming,
 Let faith and hope combine
 With love, the greatest, mine!

Heart
That grieved and pitieth even passing smart—
Soul
Caught up into wide vision of the whole—
Hark to the eager call
From life but fragmentary
To love fulfilling all:
Help! by the heart of Mary!
Help! by the soul of Paul!

I went to a window, thinking about going to cheer the care-taker, and the sunset kept me there. The usual bands of rose and turquoise of our twilight horizon were not to be seen; the whole sky was dappled in pink as often by day in white. The meaning of the low-hanging smoke was shown. The air was in a tumult of the strange symbolism which seems to reveal personality, showing broken rainbow, fallen castle, ruined bridge in the sky before a storm. Here were glimpses of palaces, churches, monasteries as of the Kremlin esplanade. None of the sadness of Gothic art, with its vain upward reaching, but the true romance of Muscovite architecture, all its wild caprices of blue, red, and apple-green, of rose-in-bloom and lily-in-bud

bell-towers, gilded spires and cupolas, *rococo* and Byzantine joined, like fantastic freaks of frost, and here and there were touches of snow. There was Frederick the Great's room, coated with amber, the raised parts translucent; here the famous pavement of agates. Lovely letters of the Russian alphabet, in Greek attitudes, drifted in line, like the decorative frieze in Oriental palaces. Amid a crowd of half-revealed figures, the chief one, in Byzantine style, three times the height of others, even seemed to carry the long sword of Paul.



The third time, the name flashed upon me, the Complaint of the Three Mariners. Close by came men's voices in cooing, sputtering Russ. Sailors often climbed up the hill to look at the sea, as actors enjoy the theatre.

Now, the words came back to me:

**"We were two, we were three,
We were three mariners
of Groix."**

When I answered a knock at my door five unknown Russians, sailors, by their bronzed faces

and the dress of three of them, stood bowing before me.

"Mrs. Trevelyan," said the handsome leader, a haughty Pole in fur pelisse and cap, "my name is Vladimir Stroganoff. I am the supercargo of the Stormy Petrel. We know of your interest in Russia and call to pay our respects."

The second, a fine-looking gentleman, wore a blue coat with gold buttons, a gold plate on the shoulder with raised crown and stars and a number, and a very white flat-topped cap. He said: "I am Boris Volokhoff, formerly of the Russian navy; later, master of the Jolly Polly."

How could a master-mariner's widow refuse? I thought they knew the priest. I let them in.

The third was a big, clumsy man of over-bearing way, with a whisky-bottle sticking out of his pocket, outlined through his old blue boat-cloak with a look of hoar frost upon it, the salt of what far seas! "I am Dmitri Dmitrivitch, second mate of the Stormy Petrel," he blustered. "I want to say to you, Mrs. Trevelyan, you are the one woman in ten that we Russians say has a soul!"

The other two were in sailor suits. The fourth was a wiry man, with onyx eyes and the indrawn gaze of the wizard Finns; his hair was like Fin-

land granite, reddish speckled with gray; he wore ear-rings. On his shoulder, also bowing to me, perched a tiny monkey, as if his familiar.

He and the boy bowed first to the *icon*. Then he said: "I am Alexis Prayrafsky; and this boy," motioning toward the last one, "is Ivan Bitia-gofsky, both of us seafaring men, sailor and cabin-boy of the Stormy Petrel."

The boy was a sad-faced Kalmuck, wearing one big ear-ring. He handed me some flowers. The monkey hurried down to present one to me and dashed back up his master's arm.

"The castor-bean tree in your garden," said the captain, "looks like an old friend. My father had a plantation of it."

"It pleases us," said the supercargo, "to find here our petunias, marigolds, daisies, verbenas, red poppies and thyme."

"Have you been here long?" I asked.

"Well—yes—some time, said he; "we are—so to speak—marooned."

I concluded they were changing ships.

"You find this a contrast to the bigness and flatness of St. Petersburg," said I.

"There's nothing here like St. Isaac's; that cost millions," the boy burst forth. "To gild the copper

of the cupola fourteen bushels of English ducats were melted down. Fourteen bushels of ducats! Our Nevskyshrine is a pyramid fifteen feet high, a ton and a half of pure silver!"

"You would like Gautier's words about St. Petersburg," said I,— "a city of gold upon a horizon of silver."

"Our sky," said the supercargo, "is never sapphire; it is like opal or the chill blue of steel."

"Always," added the captain, "like late afternoon on your Atlantic coast."

"There are times when this looks like a foreign seaport," I said, "when the water seems to have risen and crowded the city under the hill; there are views from these corners satisfying as food, like the eastward glimpse from Jackson and Taylor streets."

"The water is always threatening," said the Finn, "to carry out the Mexican monk's old prophecy of this city's drowning."

"There are none of these illusions on the stern coast of the prim Puritans and their descendants," said the captain. "Mirage belongs to a different class of people."

"An atmosphere of miracle," I said, "suits a city of a saint."

"We have no begging friars in Russia," the mate boomed at me in a hoarse voice. "It is not your St. Francis that interests Russians, but your bear, the favorite animal of our St. Sergius."

The boy had run to a window. "Look!" he cried. "A shooting star! Come to fetch souls!"

I saw a glance of meaning going from one to another till all five had caught it.

"One of our superstitions," said the captain.

I brought forward my *samovar* and made tea, serving it in their fashion in glasses, with lemon and big lumps of sugar for them to hold and nibble now and then, the monkey joining in this. The Kalmuck slyly spilled drops towards the north, south, east, and west, like the tribute paid by the New Mexican Indians.

"I used to wish," said I, "that my husband would go to Russia to bring me beautiful things made there."

They glanced at each other. Presently the supercargo drew from his pocket and showed me bracelets of globes of crystal and of amethyst. The Finn had a spoon carved by monks with the text: "Seek by prayer and supplication." Stroganoff brought out a necklace of rose tourmalines set with diamonds. The sailor showed turquoises

from the old mines of Nishapur, dozens set in rolls of wax. The mate's boat-cloak had hidden bolts of tissues woven with gold and silver threads, and slippers of gay morocco covered with gold embroidery. Volokhboff showed a brooch of exquisite *niello* work, and then a Moldavian woman's necklace of gold coins. The monkey darted upon their glitter and ran home proudly wearing it.

I vainly tried to buy some of the finery. They beamed upon me with smiling refusal that showed their gleaming teeth. "No, no; not these," they said, and put them away.

"I would like to show you some Russian ornaments a neighbor has," I said; "we cannot tell the inscriptions."

I started towards the door. There was a general rising. I found myself surrounded and got back to my chair, but in the gentlest manner, by my big-waisted, baby-eyed callers.

"No," said the captain; "let us look at your *curios*."

They politely feigned interest in what could not have been new to them: costly shawls of palm-leaf covered Cashmere, and heavily embroidered crape, of which, with Flemish guipure lace, I had

made *portieres* and mantel-drapery; French trifles in porcelain, gold, and ivory; crystal and gold perfume-caskets, a fan that was Pompadour's, some Sevres cups and saucers; rare old amber Satsuma jars; huge polar-bearskins; wide-spread antlers; carved tusks, odd bronzes, Parian statuettes and groups; an emu's egg of palest green, a large fan of white peacock feathers, a carved teakwood table from India; a cherry-stone bracelet bearing three years of Chinese carving; bits of the Constitution, the Bounty, and the first Atlantic cable; from Corea a carved tortoise-shell necklace and box topped with dragons and a little ivory god that was never to be laid on its back or it would bring ill-luck on the one who gave it to my husband,—her family had owned it for three centuries; things collected through many years, numberless, of varying worth, but some of extreme value.

The Russians vied with each other in trying to please me with stories. The mate told of trees of seaweed, mountain-ranges of coral, and great grottoes of amber. The supercargo named treasures of the Troitsa monastery: coats of mail wrought with verses from the Koran; the chain of the first of the Romanoffs, every link with an

engraved prayer and one of the Czar's titles, ninety-nine in all; Gospels encrusted with gems and clasped by cameos; diamond-set chalices; and brocade dalmatics worked with flowers in precious stones. The captain mentioned the African trees of silver-gray, where the gray parrots roost unseen.

The boy told of the Granovitaia Palata, the Facet Palace, the whole inside known as the Gilded Room, its gold walls covered with dark paintings and legends in the fine old Slavonic letters, the very height of the dazzling, gloomy, and imposing. "It is like walking in a story-book," he said.

They were all pleased with a pastel an artist friend had made for lines of mine, which he had framed beneath it.

A FOG

Dim, shifting shape, the buildings loom afar,—
Is it a driving snowstorm held in air?
Almost I hear the sleigh-bells' beating jar
White silence sound but faintly can impair
In scene like crystal ball of icy glare,
For Memory, mystic seer its visions are!
Dim, shifting shape the buildings loom afar,—
Is it a snowfall spellbound in the air?

I watch o'er tufted palm the evening-star.

Then aerial currents drifting, duping, snare,
The wailing fog-horn warns of harbor-bar,

On far-off frosty road I seem to fare.

Dim, shifting shape, the buildings loom afar,—
Is it a film of snowflakes charmed in air?

"A fog is as mysterious as beautiful," said the captain. "There is a wide difference in the stillness inside and outside. It has interspaces where sound never penetrates; this causes wreck even near fog-whistles."

"In the next house," said I, "they have a pastel much like this, but larger, by the same artist; let me borrow it to show you."

Again I had almost reached the hall. Then the supercargo was politely leading me across the room, and the others were between me and the door.

"Do not take the trouble," they were all gently saying.

"Let the Finn show you some of his sorcery," said the captain.

At once the sailor's arms were waving, and the air was full of flying cards which returned to him and were caught by monkey as well as by master.

Through our silence of watching him there came once a sound like a faraway cry, and again I saw that meaning look go round. Stroganoff begged for music. I played Glinka and Rubinstein. Volokhoff sang a Muscovite love-song, a mingling of joy and grief; a smothered fire, the southern sun and northern gloom. Dmitrivitch began to bellow:

"Five betel-nut palms of Bombay," in tones of a fog-horn, but was checked by the Captain. Stroganoff played strains of Tschaikowsky's pathetic symphony, showing me the trombones' heart-broken cries, dying away, one by one, at the close.

"Like expiring torches at a midnight funeral," said he.

"Moliere's!" I suggested.

"Juliet's," he said.

"Why," I asked, "do people speak as if deep feeling could be only in play or song or story?"

"Lord love ye, ma'am!" roared the big mate, "we could spin you yarns that beat playhouse and book all to tatters."

"I should like nothing better," said I.

"Tell her," said the boy, "about the galleon foundered off Acapulco with crusadoes of gold,

chests of pieces of eight, wrought crucifixes of precious ore, gold and silver bars, silks, spices, costly tea, chocolate, and sweetmeats."

"I might tell of fire at sea," said the captain, "or wild adventure on the coast of Africa, when I was in the 'black ivory' trade and could have got one hundred blacks for one white woman."

"I could make your blood run cold, Mrs. Trevelyan," shouted the great mate, "all about being hemmed in by icebergs, or chased by sharks."

"Speak about the Manila ship," the boy said, "that had four hundred and fifty in the crew, carried a hundred and fifty pirates, prisoners, and a three-million-dollar cargo of gold, satins, musk, jewels, wines, and conserves."

"I can tell of St. Elmo's lights," said the Finn, "or of were-wolves among some wedding guests."

"Tell," the boy urged, "about when the pirates counted out five hundred and ninety-nine guineas in half and whole pieces, all of Queen Anne's time, yet fresh and delightful to feel of."

"She wants to hear," asserted the mate, positively, "about a ship being ketched in the bottom of a whirling blow, in pitch dark, nothing left of creation but a hole of light way up over us, the

eye of the storm, we calls it, leering down to see how we takes it, or how to upset us."

"I want her to hear," said the boy, "about the three ships Dampier met, laden deep as they could swim with tons and tons of quince marmalade, that would have had eight hundred thousand gold pieces only they got wind of freebooters."

"I could make your face as long as a wet hammock, ma'am," cried the mate, "about a masked cap'n, and a lady made to walk the plank."

"Come, come," said the supercargo, "Mrs. Trevelyan is not to get nervous. Let us tell her our own story. You begin it, captain."

"That'll ease off a point or so for each man," thundered the mate, "a five-stranded, left-handed twister!"

The captain began: "The Jolly Polly was a tramp vessel, now smuggling opium, or musk, then in the 'black ivory' line, another time carrying pirate's treasure. I need not say what cruise I was on when we sighted a ship we had several times heard of from vessels spoken. They reported her as 'acting strangely.' She carried a distress-signal, the reversed ensign, and colors that cried 'To Speak,' yet she was said to run away

from any attempt to reach her. When we saw her she carried fore-sail, lower top-sail, spanker and main-sail set; everything else was in confusion, as if dropped suddenly. She was painted blue, with a fine red and gold line her length, and a red, blue and gold figure-head. The name on the stern read The Stormy Petrel. She seemed to wait for us, gently swaying, as if but a mermaid's fan in motion, she was so far and small to the naked eye. There was no gleam from polished brass and glass as she moved; all looked dingy. As we came up there was no answer to our cries. Nobody showing on deck to watch the coming of the boat I sent, I had curiosity enough to set off myself in a second boat. There was no one on board the Petrel. We could find no trace of hurt; she had not struck a reef or been run into; stern, sternpost, and rudder were all right. Seamen's chests and some of their clothes left about were dry. They had not met very heavy weather. A little bottle of vanilla on the cook's table had not been upset; the pitch in the waterways had not started; hull, masts, and yards were perfect; there was not a crack in the grimed paint of the deck-house. The deck was smeared everywhere with old stains of blood. It was flush-

decked; you looked from the taffrail along a platform whose length was broken only by skylights, the forward windlass, and once by the galley long-boat, but that and all the boats were gone. The cabin was large, panelled in pale blue and red and gold, and light with a big stern window. There was a woman's long black cloak here, a lace handkerchief and carved ivory fan there. A table under the lamp bore books and papers. A woman's diary, made of loose sheets, had dates of months after the last entry in the log, but now weeks old. It was merely bits about the weather and her being all alone. There was a piece of poetry in the same writing on a sheet of paper fallen to the floor, where there was also a small square of paper, folded once, with the word '*Act!*' on it, in a man's writing. The captain's chronometer, sextant, and charts were gone. No bills of lading, no manifest, were found. The cargo had been taken away, but small wedges of gold were scattered about, proving it had been a treasure ship. Why it had been deserted was a riddle we did not think we could ever solve, but in the hope of salvage-claim we took the Petrel in tow.

"Some days later we all heard, one dark night, the whistling of a Russian air, but could not tell

where it came from. The crew thought the Petrel might be haunted; but I was sure the sound came from another side, and long hung over the star-board rail listening. It came and went, a fine, loud whistling of a beautiful old tune, slowly louder and louder, till the man in the fore-castle cried:

"'It's right off the bow, sir; but I don't see anything.'

"Again and again it rose and fell, with a hopeless sadness in it that curdled my blood. I ordered the Polly stopped and had rockets sent up. At last these showed a little boat drifting close by, with a boy sitting in it and whistling, whistling, with no sign of seeing or hearing us. I had a boat lowered for a mate and some rowers, and had port-fires burning to show them how to find the boy and come back to us. When the boy was hoisted on board he cried:

"'The cap'n and the second mate! Why haven't I come across 'em?'

"He was dazed and could hardly be made to eat and drink what was brought him, and soon fell into the dead sleep of exhaustion. To all our questions his only reply was once to exclaim:

"'O! I was so afraid of drifting ashore and finding Chocolate Charley and his gang!'"

The captain rose, and saying "Allow me," carried a light from the mantelpiece to a table. It was the third time he had moved the lamps; he had them now near windows. I concluded that his nerves took whims.

"I wish I hadn't!" cried the boy. "I wish I hadn't! But how could I know? And I was so afraid! It was blessed hard on *me*, too! When I see the Jolly Polly I thought it was only one of my dreams till I see it was tugging another one that lurches and peeps from behind just as if on the lookout for me, but trying not to have me find out it was the Stormy Petrel. I was in one of my queer spells. I couldn't help myself. I let 'em take me on board. When they all crowds round, asking this and that, at first I says:

"'I don't know about that ship.'

"But I used to sit and stare at it so that Cap'n Volokhoff says at last:

"'You do know about the Petrel; I see it in your face.'

"'Where is the lady?' says I, for I was most dead with wanting to know.

"'There was nobody on the Petrel when we found it,' says he.

"My heart was full; I couldn't see. I burst out

crying, and cried a good while, for all I had left her there alone. She was so kind, and pretty enough for a figure-head, and I liked her so much till the last, and then I was only afeard. When they sets us adrift in the Petrel we knowed it was going to be all chance with us, but we tries to cheer each other up.

"She says: 'We must meet some vessel.'

"'We've got lots to eat,' says I.

"'We are safer here than on some island,' says she.

"I says: 'We've got rid of Black Bill's blue mug and his boosy set.'

"I tells her fine pirate-stories, only she'd laugh when I didn't see anything funny. She tells me of grand doings at court; soldiers there with big diamonds in their epaulets and sword-hilts; ladies in dresses of lace 'like a spider's web,' says she, 'and worth as much as rubies and diamonds.' She'd been to a great ball the night she come to the ship.

"'I had not gone home,' says she, 'when I was forced to hurry to the wharf. I had to pay the driver of a *drozki* with my lace over-dress. It was a fortune for him.'

"Her handsome yellow satin she wears caught

up all round over her lace-trimmed skirts, rather tumbled and soiled now. She hides it all under her long cloak, only on deck, when it blowed chilly, she had to wear my pea-jacket and the bo'sun's sou'wester; though that couldn't hide the fine lady. She was good company then. She tells me about seeing nine bushels of pearls at the Troitsa monastery, just left over from embroidery. She'd been to feasts where she had real caravan tea, the ten-dollars-a-pound kind, not hurt by sea-voyaging; and oysters and grapes and watermelon, brandied cherries and sugar-glazed filberts!

"We tried to forget where we was, for we couldn't bear to stay on deck, on account of the splashes of blood, nor in the cabin—it was too lonesome. It was hard to take in that we two was there alone, after all we'd known going on up and down.

"'We are going to meet the Portuguese carrack that never come home,' says I, 'with a castellated stern rising into a tower from her poop and poop-royal, and in her hold thousands of pounds' worth of gold and silver bars, ingots, doubloons and ducats, gems, and minted money. That's the ship you ought to be on!'

"'It does sound like 'my ship', says she.

"The time come when we didn't say much. We watches for days a smooth swell, most too lazy to go by us, and the slow sway across the deck of the shadow of the mizzen-mast, like a lullaby, listens to the straining of bulkheads, clicking of doors loosely hooked, and the flapping of the canvas, till we feels we might as well be dead and under hatches. Then a breeze would send us skimming like the gulls slanting against the wind or hanging in the air round us, for the lady makes me scatter feed on deck for 'em. When we'd feel the stir and rush we'd cheer up and watch the snow of foam behind us and see things in it, same as you can looking in the fire. She see flower-wreaths, hearts, and stars mostly, but I could make out fortress and cannon and smoke of battle. Dear heart! how afeard she was of a stiff blow, when the rigging screamed and the mast-heads leaned over, and we has to steady ourselves by rail or belaying-pin. Once or twice in many weeks we see ships creep out and in the haze on the horizon. I hoists the colors 'To Speak' and a brand new white ensign I finds in the color chest.

"'To show 'em we ain't pirates,' I says. 'When they ketches sight of that the first mate with a

telescope will run up on the main-royal yard, the second mate with a telescope will climb up on the fore-royal yard, and the cap'n will be trumpeting: 'Ahoy'!

"She laughs and says: 'Think of their surprise to find after all that hurrah, only a woman and a boy.'

"But the vessels we see gets swallowed in fog or we did. And the Portuguese carrack, too! After we'd been hurried along for days by short winds, or stopped as if anchored for weeks, she gets downhearted. I knowed by her eyes that she cries a good deal, but she never let me see her doing of it. She knowed it was dirty luck for me, too. She asks me about my folks and makes me tell her things she could say to 'em in case she ever got home and I never did. I wants to do the same for her, but she says:

"'It is better for you yourself that you should not name me. There is only one I want to reach. I don't know where.'

"One day I see her leaning over the bulwark rail and goes up to her. She was looking where the ensign shadowed a white streak under the stern that made me think of a burial at sea and the body sinking.

"'Haul it down!' she says, with a shiver. 'It is too like a shroud!'

"So I does, but I hated to lose such a big signal. Then she takes spells of walking, walking, walking sometimes all night above and below, all over the ship; though, while she was in her right mind, she was shy of the bloody deck. I put off and put off trying to clean it up; it turned my stomach to think of it. After a while she wouldn't eat nor talk, but sits all the time writing, writing. I got afeard of her big, wild eyes and crazy ways, and when I see a branch with green leaves on the water, I says to myself:

"'We can't be far from some island; I'll risk it!' I'd always been fond of sitting in the cap'n's gig to watch the foam and spray about the rudder when we gets a breeze, and she didn't mind my going there now. Little by little, I lays in provisions, and one night when she was standing behind the interlacing of the main shrouds, looking ahead, I sets to work and slowly, one end at a time, gets the gig lowered. Right you are! The night was mild, the lady had no wrap, her hair was dressed very fine, and she was a-letting down her long train. The next minute I knowed she'd be a-pacing to and fro, a-singing a polonaise,

and a-playing she was at the ball. I seen her do it lots of times. Over and over I'd put off going, and maybe I'd stayed this time if she hadn't set up her forlorn piping. A polonaise is just a high swagger of a march, no more dance of the horn-pipe sort than standing still is, and when the music is sad, like the 'Oginski,' it is all sobs and a catching of the breath. So I drops gently after the gig, and lets the ship move off with naked davits and hanging tackle. I hates to lose the Petrel; as I looks up at it the spars was tossing against the moon as if it knowed, from flying jib-boom end to the taffrail, the whole yarn, and was uneasy as I was. I was sorry right off when I couldn't get back. A wind rose and carried me away. I lost sight of the ship and found no island. I felt it serves me right for deserting the poor lady. Some nights, when the sky was a mass of stars, there was liberty and brightness of morning, but the others! Folks on shore don't know what the dark means; at sea it is thick black, like velvet. Sometimes all the top of the water would flicker and gleam, as if thinking about me or trying to tell me something. One black night there comes up a wet squall, and the lightning looks to be slanting right after me. I was too scared to do any-

thing at night, but on a calm day, though I didn't know what way to go, I used to row and row till I was dead tired and didn't care what come. I was lonesome for the lady, and I missed the noise of big sails beating the masts. I knowed no vessel would sight me, for often a haze shut the horizon in to within a few yards, and in clear weather my boat on the big blue made about as much show as a bird. I found I'd only divided a clove hitch, the lady and I had each now one to ourselves. So I goes on, day after day, night after night, never knowed when some big monster might knock my boat over and drag me down, and soon I had nothing left to eat. One night the full moon hangs like a big gold-piece in the sky, and I could seem to hear the lady singing the Ukrainian love-song, 'The Moon.' I couldn't bear to hear her—it was sweet, but just like storm-clouds coming up, it made me want to cry—yet the time had come when I begins to whistle it for company every night. I got forgetful spells, when I didn't know how I come to be there alone, and, by the powers! each day and night seemed a year long. It was a rum start to find the Jolly Polly had got me, but the queerest of all was when the lookout soon after sighted an island, so far away,

shining and sparkling, and the water pounding so white on the reef I thinks of a bit of green glass dropped in snow. The air was so clear, like looking through a telescope, we see a man come to the shore long afore we gets nigh. The sun was like a ball of fire sinking into an ocean as of blood; there was a red glare on the whitening breakers, on clouds of sea-birds, on the dazzle of green and white, and on that figure standing on the beach, as if he'd sent for us, the man the crew of the Petrel thought had danger in him, they says:

"'He and his shadow is the worst cards in the pack!'

"It was calm as if he had been tying up the winds in knots of his handkerchief. Here was the Petrel coming right back where she'd been set adrift, and there stood, by the men's yarns, a Finn who could sail a ship in contrary winds.

"'The Knave of Spades,' they calls him, 'and his shadow, the Nine Spot!'

"There was a little imp standing beside him, no bigger than a sprit-sail knot, and I says to myself:

"'That's the Ace!'"

Here the restless boy left the room, running to the front door and back. I thought he feared

the Finn might not like his words; still he had been dodging out and in all the evening.

"When I see two ships driving tandem," said the sailor, "and as they draws near makes out that the hind one is the Petrel, I was struck all of a heap.

"Shiver my timbers!" says I to the monkey. 'If it ain't the whole blessed ship, from cross-trees to kelson!'

"And the monkey takes off *his* cap and scratches *his* head and smooths *his* chin, and tries, too, to think it all out.

"I see the boy on deck of the Polly, but no sign of the lady. They sends a boat off for me, and when I climbs aboard the vessel, here is Ivan ready to square off at me.

"Do you know each other?" says the captain.

"It's the Knave of Spades! He has got us back," cries the boy. 'The Petrel was here and he cut the hawser.'

"What could you see in the darkness?" says I. 'It was Chocolate Charley, 'cause he suspects I wants to get aboard and leave 'em.'

"Where is he? Where are they all?" says Ivan.

"Gone to the bottom or come out t'other side of the world!" says I. 'Black Bill give me a maul-

ing, and they clears out when I knowed nothing. Where's the lady?"

"'Gone,' says he, and turns his back.

"The Petrel had a fiery set of Malays, Portuguese, Chileans, and a lot of half-breeds. Some of 'em had been ugly and put in irons; that cripples us by want of hands, and a big blow drives us leagues and leagues out of our course. They lays it all to the Finn. One dark night I was at the wheel, but I knows what's going on, that the first mate, who was on watch, is being gagged and bound. It wa'n't no use for me to try to stop it.

"Black Bill, one of the Malays, says to me: 'Old Jack of Spades, just keep off! You might have put one of your spells on 'em and saved us this trouble. But we'll keep you to whistle up winds for us.'

"Chocolate Charley, a quadroon, and Gentleman George, a Portuguese, who might have been an earl, he was so high and mighty and lazy, gets the cap'n and second mate on deck by some trick, and then has four men seize each one.

"'Now,' they says, 'we've taken the ship! You've got to agree to navigate her where we say, or we'll cast you adrift.'

"The cap'n was pluck clear through. He swears

blue streaks and thunders out: 'I scorn to even answer you!'

"The mate loves a fight, and he sets to and trips up two of the men holding him, and punches another on the head and doubles up the fourth by a dig in the ribs.

"'Look out for squalls, cap'n!' he says. 'I'll attend to *your* men now.' And he steers for 'em.

"There was an orderly set on board, too; they gets at the arms-chest, as well as the others, and comes a-running up and takes sides agin Chocolate Charley and his men, and so here was as pretty a fight as ever you see, bang of pistol and clash of cutlass in a pitched battle right off and the deck running blood.

"'You ought to have sanded the deck first, man-of-war fashion,' I sung out.

"'You mind your wheel!' hollers Bill. 'We'll sand the deck with bodies!'

"There was a good deal of dull thumping of the deck, and many goes overboard without a boat and with a stiff air of thinking they could walk the water, or not caring whether land or water waits for their feet. The first mate was one of these,—died where he was gagged and bound, maybe from fright at being helpless. There was

few left of the good men and true sort, and they was mostly the scared ones who never shows fight. The launch was lowered, the cap'n and second mate forced to go over into it by pistols held at their heads. The cap'n was fond of his ship, let alone the disgrace of losing a treasure-cargo, and as the Petrel sheers off his last look at us was pitiful. I knowed he was steering near the wind; they'd killed him as much as if they'd shot him. He was speechless, but the mate yells and yells back till the ship lost hail of him, telling the leaders of the mutiny what blasted fools they was, for none of 'em could navigate. The first thing was to help themselves from the ship's stores, and they drinks all hands quiet for a spell. The poor lady had heard the row and locks herself up and tells through the door anybody that comes that she is ill. She was such a frail wax-doll they cares nothing for her more than for a foam-wreath. They tears and yells and sings till they drops. When they sobers up, they has a long talk and decides to land at some island and bury the treasure to lose its link with the ship.

"'There was a stiff blow last night,' says Chocolate Charley to me, 'and we knows who called it up, you Jack of Spades, and we're not going

to risk our cargo with *you*. Just you find a desert island now, if you values your life!

"I knows more about setting a course than they thinks, so I steers in a certain direction, though it was many days afore we sights an island; and Chocolate Charley was suspicious, and used to stand and glare at me and want to curse, but hardly dare, 'cause they was afeard of the Finn's power for bedevilment. And I don't know but some of 'em thought I conjured up the island we finds. It did look like a vision, with its coral-grit like drifts of snow heaped on the dark blue water, its tall spikes of grass, its clumps of coconut-trees with tufted heads, its glaring green, and its birds of gold and red and blue. We couldn't get very near, and the treasure has to be carried ashore by boat-loads, and some of it gets swamped in the surf. I'll not deny I was looking at it, hoping it might. It took several days. The rest of us men goes ashore, too; the scary ones had to help.

"I finds out, one afternoon, why supplies was taken off the vessel, too. Chocolate Charley was the only one for burying the treasure; Black Bill was for building a big raft, to get picked up with it at sea, and no proof it was a steal nor trouble

of coming back to dig it up, and nobody else finds it. I overhears Gentlemen George mutter:

“‘If we leave it here, we’d better bury the Finn with it to leave him on guard.’

“‘If you do,’ says I, ‘by the powers! remember me when the next storm rises, that’s all!’

“At dusk I steals down to the water’s edge and waits for the steady ones, meaning for us to get back to the ship on the sly and get off with the lady and cabin-boy left on board. I could navigate well enough. There was such a thunder of big rollers I hears nobody behind me. The first I knows I gets flung up the beach. Chocolate Charley was sawing away on the hawser with his sea-gully. He had a sheet in the wind’s eye, and never thinks how taut the Petrel was pulling. When the hawser snaps, it jerks him into the surf. The vessel starts off in a hurry. I see the lady in the big stern-window, a light behind her. She springs to her feet. The boy shows dimly, hanging over the bulwark rail; I hears his faint cry for ‘Alexis!’ for we gets on well together. Chocolate Charley, carried by the tide goes plunging after, as if in chase, and he never comes back. The scary ones didn’t get round. Black Bill and Gentleman George come running

down, thinks I cast Chocolate Charley into the water, and falls upon me; Gentleman George, too lazy to do more than hold me, while Black Bill give me such a drubbing I knowed nothing for days.

"When I comes to myself there was no noise but the beating of the surf on the reef. It was broad day. There was this little man," patting the monkey, "stands by me and looks anxious.

"When he finds that I see him, he offers his paw, as much as to say:

"'Let me know if I can do anything.'

"I was too weak for a while to stir. When I could sit up I see all the litter of raft-building. They must have shanghaied the timid men for the sake of having their help. They had left pork and rum and biscuit, 'cause they was afeard of me. I had been simply marooned. It wa'n't likely there was any *cache*, though I hunts some, but finds no sign. The company of the monkey was worth more than the treasure there. Poor little cast-away, he must have been some wrecked sailor's pet, for monkeys are not found on those islands, and I never heerd of one that had evoluted into being born with a little cap, which he has on when I first see him. He was fine company, not to talk,

but a deep thinker; he used to sit by me watching the sea for a sail, and look dreadfully old and wise—seemed to know the most of the two of us. He would climb a tree and throw cocoanuts down, and take care not to hit me, and watch me fish, as if he felt himself above such silly trifling away of time, always staying by me, unless he sees I means to shoot a bird; then he runs into the woods till the noise is over. Sometimes he would study hard over a tattoo-mark on my wrist and arm; it was plain he thought it ought to run up to my shoulder; he would push up my sleeve and puzzle over the matter and look up in my face. So I made out that his master must have had the long tattoo he was remembering. When I first see the Jolly Polly staving along with the Petrel behind, I says to him: 'By thunder!' And he claps *his* paw on *his* knee, as if the sight was just what surprised *him*. When the Jolly Polly takes us aboard he acts all at home, and sits up in the rigging as if he was hired for the lookout. The boy and I couldn't talk much about the lady. We didn't think to see anybody belonging to the Petrel, but as we goes into Honolulu I grabs Ivan's arm, and says I:

"Did you ever lay eyes on that man afore?

Over there, at the top of the landing-stairs. See him stare at us!

"'Lord!' says the boy.

"But we never run afoul of Black Bill and Gentleman George, and you may lay to that. As soon as I stands up again on that there island I spends the same hour every night thinking of 'em and their raft, and dancing three steps to the right, three steps to the left, and three turns with my arms raised to the full moon, and whistling, whistling, whistling. You get great help in such things from doing of it in a lonely place; you needn't think your wish with such heavy underlines, so to speak; mine took to 'em like pitch.

"There was a shipshape gale come up that no raft could live in!"

The sailor's little wizard-chum gave him a pat on the head, as if in high approval.

"Who the lady was or where she come from, nobody on the Petrel knew," the big mate's rumbling voice began: "If she'd waited till daylight the police or custom-house officers would have ketched her. It was along in the third watch she come gliding down the wharf like a black shadow. As she sweeps along the deck we see right off she was A1, fore, main, and mizzen. Under

'her long, black cloak there was the edge of a prim-rose satin ball-dress. She seems sort of wild to find some one she expects to meet, and begs the cap'n to wait—wait—wait! But he sees she was a way-up lady and was afeard of trouble. She didn't tell who was to come, only says 'Wait!' Our supercargo was a stranger, who didn't come nor send word. The cap'n scented some police business; so off we goes, hand over hand, right on time. The cap'n give her the cabin the supercargo would have had, and the officials overhauling us afore we starts didn't notice there was any door where the cap'n slid the big screen he kept for scary times. When we gets fairly off up she comes on deck. She had all us officers taut in tow, first look—she was a dainty duff, with lots of plums, but she didn't see anybody there. She just cries and rings her hands and holds her arms towards the last of the Russian shore. It is queerly level to what this coast is, so flat, so low, just a pencil-line between sea and sky, the slop of the water often hiding the land, the lighthouse towers looks like sails.

" 'Oh! for your wings to go back—to go back!' she cries to the gulls.

"The captain tries to calm her, and gets her to

go below agin, and there she stays for weeks. She'd only just come on deck, biting lemons all day, when we had the mutiny. There was great wonder about our missing supercargo, and through that it at last got told about among the crew that the Petrel was a treasure-ship. We did have, but didn't mean to have all hands know, six hundred thousand pounds in gold from the big Golenski mines, even where it was consigned kept secret, so far, by the captain and first mate. We had weeks of fog and days of gale, and that tremendous blow, after some of the ugly men had been put in irons, sends us far off our track, and the Petrel was a lost bird till she could have all hands at work.

"I never sailed along of a harder set; I knowed Chocolate Charley, Black Bill, and Gentleman George was ripe for the gallows, but I didn't think they'd break out this trip till I found them athwart my hawse. It was a lovely fight after I sails slap in. Blows and kicks and cries and stamp and rush of feet, and roar of shots and cutlasses clashing, and the deck slippery with gore! Lord love ye! it was fun! Never got so thirsty in my life! Pity the leaders got drowned, I'd have liked to dangle 'em, a pretty row of 'em, from a yard-arm! If all the steady men on board had been decent and

loved fighting as I do, as a baby loves sweets, we could have got Black Bill and his gang into irons. And when that mess of swabs cast the cap'n and me loose, I was swearing mad, 'cause I knowed we could have got the best of 'em, if there'd been enough spunk on board. When the cap'n see his pet ship going off with this here precious cargo right afore his blessed dead-lights and knows the cruise is bungled for good and all, he jumps overboard. All his plans about ship and treasure, all his concern in life amounts to a few bubbles float-ing by me! I must have been within half a plank of death, tossing in that there boat nigh upon a month. I got out of provisions; the soft-headed lubbers flung only a little stock on board; it's a wonder the likes of 'em done so much. I turned light-headed, and when I hove in sight of the Black Gull I knowed nothing of it; but they sees and sends a boat. I was for fighting when they sheers alongside, and they has to seize me. I was sick for weeks after they left me at Honolulu. When I gets out doors I goes to the landing-stairs and sits in the sun with other salts stranded there, to do my share of jawing about rot'ry storms and pirates.

"There was a Russian not long from China and Japan that I had some talk with; but I never

thinks, by a long sea-mile, that he knewed anything about the Petrel, till the Jolly Polly come a-towing of her round the bight. When I gets a bit over my own set-back by it, I sees a sudden change in this man's face, a whiteness, a set holding of himself together, as if some shock was a-threatening to knock him to pieces.

"Do you know either of the ships?" says I.

"He looks at me as though he didn't know what I says; and it was plain he couldn't speak."

The mate took the sailor's cards into his ragged fingers with livid patches of nails and set himself to playing *solitaire*, keeping his air of bluster toward the game, and fierce, even in his silence.

"The day before I was to leave St. Petersburg," said Stroganoff, "as supercargo on the Stormy Petrel, a note came inviting me to the theatre, signed by an unknown name. Locking my door and lowering my window-shades, I dipped a glass-brush in a corrosive liquid and wet the paper. The common ink vanished. The page turned blank. Then, like a flock of wild geese trooping across a pale autumn sky, letters in another handwriting rushed into sight. Here was a notice to appear that night at an 'illegal' tea-party to be given by our 'Circle' at the house of Vas-

sily Botcharov, late ataman or leader in a military affair which had failed. This was to talk of and guess at the unknown fate of some members of our Circle who had been lost by the late failure, doubtless carried off secretly. I was about to give up this life of constant dread. I would not have gone to Vassily's but for the hope of persuading my friend Féodor Bolchakoff and his betrothed, Nadia Hilkoﬀ, to also leave the country. They had become too well known as at least 'sympathizers' with the Circle. Féodor was still a 'legal' man, living under his own name, with a genuine passport, but we knew he had been lately watched. He had 'tarnished' his rooms by letting a refugee stay there. Nadia was an aristocratic convert to our Circle, had inherited money, and, to divert suspicion, still wore clothing too costly and elegant for one of her views. She looked very beautiful that evening when we three mingled with the dancers at the ball in the Taurida Palace; her dress was of point-lace, over primrose satin; bouquets were held on shoulder and skirt by clusters of diamonds, and there was a string of pearls in her hair. Féodor was as fine-looking as she."

The Finn, leaning toward me with his eyes in-

tently upon me, pointed to Stroganoff. I had a vision of this handsome man, not in his fur pelisse, but dressed as a military officer, gold embroidery on his uniform, diamonds on his heavy gold epaulets, buckle, sword-hilt and scabbard, stepping through the stately polonaise, with the beauty, in the famous half-mile of ball-room and conservatory with twenty thousand wax-lights on pillars, on plants, tracing border of friezes and outlining arches.

"Petroff, one of the intermediate class who aid secretly and know movements and addresses of the Circle and its friends, said in my ear, as he passed in a dance:

"'The wolves are out to-night.'

"This need not mean that they would visit Vassily. In a waltz Nadia whispered:

"'I met Dudorov Katchenski.'

"'Where?' I asked anxiously; he was one of our 'disappeared.'

"'On the Nevskoi Prospect. Swiftly as my carriage passed, he yet made the sign not to speak to him.'

"We could not leave the ball too long before others."

The vision fled. Stroganoff wore his pelisse and

sat before me. The Finn sank back, drawing the long breath of exhaustion.

"Hours after midnight are especially dangerous, yet Vassily's safety-signal in his window awaited our coming. Nothing had been learned of other vanished members.

"There was still to be 'removed' the official of the Fortress, who had lately escaped the Circle. Such officers know our unbroken law, not to follow if they take themselves off; but he boldly stayed, and we had letters from the prisoners complaining of fresh cruelties from him. To decide who should move as our avenging hand, Vassily wrote '*Act!*' on a slip of paper, folded and placed it, with many looking like it, in a Chinese jar, stirred them as if a careful brew of poison, and offered the bowl to each of us. No sign was made as to which one had drawn the word. I feared Nadia's heightened color betrayed her as its owner. I felt sure she had it when she gave all her jewels to Tchartkoff, an old gray-beard who had just been to Paris to sell such contributions to the Cause and was going again. I urged her and Féodor to leave on the Petrel; but, as we say, the mind muddled the reason; they would not hear of it.

"Tchartkoff startled all by flinging a big bomb

among us. It exploded from the fall into a thousand bits of candy—a French device.

“‘Is it ready?’ he asked; for names of persons or things are left out of the Circle.

“‘I have to fit the touch-holes, that is all,’ said Vassily. His wary ear caught some sound, which made him snatch the candle from the window, just as Petroff tore up the stairs and burst, breathless, into the room, crying:

“‘Save yourselves! The police!’

“‘I managed to murmur to Fédor and Nadia: ‘Come to the ship if you can get there,’ and then we had fled by different ways.

“‘I doubled and turned through our secret roads, passing across gardens, and even through houses, but as soon as I stepped into a main street I was stopped, and twenty-four hours later was on my way to Siberia. None of our Circle were in my gang of prisoners. There was no way to learn whether they were in some other lot or were not caught. To ask would bring them into danger they might have eluded. So with torture about them for my close companion, I crossed that awful desert where villages show like mustard-seeds, scattered so far in the white waste. To escape would be only to die by hunger or by wolves. Even the

few trees hold their branches in gestures of fear and despair, softened only by powder and filigree of snow from a low sky of unbroken gray. The Great Post Road was punishment enough. I was saved from work in the Nerchinsk mines. I met in Siberia a high official, who, on account of old family obligations, secretly helped me to join, in disguise, a tea-caravan returning to China. Another journey of week after week,—that long land route to Shanghai, by sleigh through Siberia, camel through Tartary, boat and mule through China; but now a sense of freedom gave me strength.

"Uncertain what to do, weary in mind and body, I wandered to Nagasaki, and then to Honolulu, where I lingered, not knowing that I waited to see, with amazement, the arrival of the Petrel, to hear the story of the capture of the Polly, and to walk up on his left and say:

"'I was the supercargo of that ship.'"

"I steps up on the cap'n's right," says the gruff Dmitrivitch, "and I says to him, says I: 'I was the second mate.'"

Furious with himself about his game, he sat glowering at the cards.

Stroganoff had gone to the piano, and was softly playing.

"Then," said the captain, "I sold the Jolly Polly and the chance of salvage-claim for the Stormy Petrel. We had a touch of cholera, and there was not much left of us when we reached San Francisco."

"Thank you," I said. "How I wish I could have seen what the lady had written!"

The captain drew from his pocket a folded paper, yellow with age and blue with damp, opened it and read to me an appeal from the poor lady to her lost lover. The undercurrent of Stroganoff's music made it seem very touching.

"It has the stress of Mascagni's *Intermezzo*!" I cried. "And he never knew!"

"That is as it may be," said Volokhoff.

"We cannot tie and unite knots in the thread of destiny," said Stroganoff.

"It leaves the story so incomplete," I said. "But that is real life. Or is it that our glimpse is uncertain?"

"Life is a bungled voyage anyhow," growled Dmitrivitch. "By the time you gets the hang of your sealed orders you're too nigh port to set your course different, and you're sure to wish you could."

He was in another fume over *solitaire*, glaring at cards and Ivan till the poor boy ran out.

"What a man is to know would be sure to reach him," said Volokhoff. "We have a story of a captain who put to sea without paying a debt contracted on a relic of the cross. A storm arose, which he calmed by throwing overboard a chest with the money, which floated safely to the claimant. He was to receive it; it could be sent recklessly."

"As we say," said Stroganoff, "what must be, must be."

"Now, she is dead," I said, sadly.

"What is being dead?" cried the Finn, with indifferent air, looking at me with pity through that veiled gaze of his onyx eyes, always looking in rather than out.

"If we only knew!" I cried.

"Creations of one kingdom, marine, animal, or vegetable," said Volokhoff, "frequently imitate those of another. So the spiritual body is often born with a mockery of physical blindness and deafness."

The Pole had glided into a strain by Chopin.

"You are the only one," I said, "I ever heard interpret that angelic voice as I do. It is not grieving, but comforting."

I brought him my rhymes about it.

FUNERAL MARCH

Chopin

Hear muffled throb of the heavy hearts, helpless
and terrified.

Death, like a wind, blowing fragile web of their
affairs aside,

Tore it and tattered and dashed it to earth, stunned,
aghast, they chide:

Merged in the One? Or transfigured self? What
and where is the dead?

Death is a sphinx, in vain Life has put ear to its
lips and pled—

Blank desert space! And maybe no more though
All were to be read.

All of the body wants are met,
How should the spirit famish yet?
It's thoughts are dream and vision pearled,
For its delight there lies unfurled
Transcendent beauty of the world,
Though but pontoon to bear ye, hurled
Above what dizzy deep on deep!
Below illimitable steep!
Through vastness ye in grandeur sweep!
Yet fear and question, yearn and weep!
The answers in your longings leap!

What know ye? Where earth wheels in flight,
Thrown by one of the shapes of might
That weave the stars in web of light?
What on the moon's far side is lain?
Why tide of wind and sea complain?
How thunder roars in rolling wane
A burst of sobs through tears of rain?
Why sap in weed or pine-tree vein
Stirs, winding as to piper-strain?
How one loam yieldeth balm and bane?
Could *I* change when the mere plum-spray
Engrafted on the Peach may stay
An individual branch? Nay, nay,
That great law moveth not astray,
I still am *I*, shall *be* alway!

And I then gone because unseen,
Though not when wall might intervene?
Yet, Nature warns, mark shrivel, cower,
The clematis; the orchard dower
Of hidden strength awaiting hour;
The deathless resurrection-flower!*

*South American. One which the writer's family has had nearly forty years, looks like a ball of brown evergreen, English-walnut size, but expands to a saucer-like lily whenever put in water.

The dark no sickle-moon may reap,
The dawn-flushed clouds in radiance heap;
Foreshadowings so round ye creep,
But dull to miracle ye keep,
For of the hints that hide and peep,
How great is this: ye rise from sleep!

Hear leaden beat of the hapless hearts, sullen,
rebellious, tried.

None know the Truth's rapt exaltation, or who
could here abide?

Yet—Voice of tender vibration!—now this their
thought as they glide:

The dragging worm in his cloak of fur knows
not of overhead,

He, too, must follow his kin, wrap himself in a
dying bed—

What beauty rises! What joy! On inaudible
wings outspread!

He read it aloud. He and Volokhoff looked at
each other and then at me.

They spoke together: "You are right, Mrs.
Trevelyan."

Ivan came in, muttering: "*Sei tshas! Sei tshas!*"
[Directly, directly!]

Dmitrivitch muttered back: "They'll have to belay that talk!"

Again that meaning glance ran round among them.

Volkhoff rose, saying: "Vladimir, son of Stroganoff, it is time."

The clumsy bulk of Dmitrivitch, in my room filled with frail treasures, made his "Stand by to go about!" as he rose, seem needful.

We had a last round of tea with a general "*Vosh durrvia!*" [Here's to you!]

"Mrs. Trevelyan, pardon our long stay," said Stroganoff, with that unseen motion that gives play to the pelisse, crosses, doubles, and claps it around the body, which it swathes mummy-like.

"You are not likely to see us again," said Volkhoff.

"We shall not forget you," said Ivan.

Dmitrivitch loomed over me in an effort to be gentle that was yet alarming. "Recollect," he said, "if your ship is ever in irons, on a lee shore, the Russians will come to the rescue."

"You will hear us spoken of to-morrow," said the captain.

"I am glad you came," said I; "I am sorry for exiles."

"That word is not used in Russia," said the supercargo. "We say—and please remember us as—'involuntary emigrants.'"

"Sometimes you gets in the midst of a hurrican and your masts going over the side before you knows it," darkly hinted the big mate, "but don't *you* be afeard. Just think of yourself as safe right among

"*'Five betel-nut palms of Bombay.'*"

"Think of the marooned," said the Finn.

I opened the doors; they passed out, bowing.

The boy gave me the comforting cry of the sea-watch: "All's well!"

The monkey, impressed by all this leave-taking, took off his tiny cap to me, but the lurch of the sailor's shoulder forced him to hastily put it on and clutch his master's collar.

They filed off into the darkness from whence they came.

The mate questioned: "*Na pravi?*" [to the right?] The captain ordered: "*Na leva!*" [to the left!] and away they went.

As their steps went down into Jones street their voices rose with true swinging deep-sea roll in other lines of that old, old chant spread from Breton fisherman to sailors of all countries:

"The north wind, the north wind,
The north wind came on to blow."

Farther and farther, fainting away in the mysterious night, like a salt breath of mid-ocean, or cries of sea-birds over the lonely deep, a concentration of the poetry and color of a calling filled with the sublime symbolism of air and sea.

So I lost my friends. I have never seen them since; but in nights of storm I have fancied I heard on gusts of wind their voices cheering me from afar with:

"We were two, we were three,
We were three mariners."

There was such a sense outdoors of the night being far gone that I drew in and locked the door, thinking "it must be too late now to visit that poor care-taker." To decide I looked at the hall clock. It was past two!

I slept late next day, only roused at noon by long and loud knocking at the front and back doors, even upon the windows. I hurried into a wrapper and opened the front door. Who were these urgent callers, with eager, anxious faces, exclaiming, as if relieved, "Here she is!" and "She is here!" and crowding upon my steps? Not only

neighbors, but policemen and reporters and some of my friends from the Mission, Hayes Valley and Oakland! They looked at me with an air of doubting that they really saw me.

"You are alive, then!" a reporter said, and two or three of my friends began to cry.

"Why not?" said I. "Why do you come like this?"

A policeman spoke: "The houses on each side of you were broken into last night and robbed, and the care-taker of the fine house was brutally murdered!"

"It was lucky for you," said a neighbor, "that you had a party."

"You are mistaken," I said.

"Well, your house was lighted in every window, up and down, back and front," said another.

Was this the reason of Ivan's running about?

"And we heard music!" said a third neighbor.

"Nothing else could have saved you," said a fourth; "lots of folks know about your valuable *curios*."

I could not believe my kindly pink-checked blonds were in league with those criminals. I explained nothing. The reporters went off in a huff. One of my friends took me home with her. Others insisted upon coming to stay with me at night.

It was late in the afternoon when I left my friend, a sea-captain's wife living on Telegraph Hill. I came down Filbert street and was looking over at the green and gray of the Russian Church, thinking of Pouchkine's St. Petersburg:

"Under a pale-green sky,
Weariness, chill, and granite!"

when the Russian priest came up the steps at the corner of Washington Square.

"Mrs. Trevelyan!" he cried. "In a city of battle, murder, and sudden death, *you* are yet safe, thank Heaven!"

"Saved, too, by a call from some of your countrymen," said I, and told the story.

"Stroganoff!" he cried, as if stunned, and made me repeat the tales told by the supercargo and the boy.

He grew younger as he listened, with his eyes on fleecy clouds in the west. "Poor Nadia!" he murmured.

I had not yet told her name.

The long slope northward of Russian Hill rose sharp-edged with light from an amber sunset, but that was not the gleam I saw on his face.

The slope is like the graceful flank of a masto-

don, and, with the house on the brink of Vallejo street, overhanging Taylor, reminded me of the children's drawing on a slate, where a house in the left upper corner has a path leading from and to it, undulating until it forms an animal, with the house for its head.

The Latin Quarter at this hour is like a deserted village; but one or two passers-by greeted the priest as "*Batiushka*" [father]. One old man, more intimate, said:

"Good evening, Féodor."

The story was complete, I thought. We went down into the Square to cross by the diagonal path.

"The lady's poem," he said with a sigh. "If I could only have read it!"

"I remember it," said I.

We sat on a bench near the giant willow, and I repeated the lines as if another voice spoke through me.

A CRY IN THE DARK

O, if I *knew*, if I knew, if I knew!

Against flood-tide of grief and dread and smart

How prove my faithful love? by what sure art!

The Judgment Day I shall forget to rue

If it but brings us face to face, we two!

Hear me! though in abysmal broken heart:
On pinnacle of joy upraised, apart:
Or here, unseen, the while I weep for you.
Who shall forbid my message? It should leap
The wreck of worlds, black chaos, touch with glow
Cloud-drift of spirits in tumultuous flow,
Your thought in sudden lift and splendor steep!
I call to you from my soul's utmost deep,
Now—*if* you know, if *you* know, if you *know*!

The priest's face shown; the kindling of an inner light had grown into radiance.

We left the Square, following Powell street, and turned up Vallejo, where Russian Hill seemed to rise to meet and listen to us, abruptly towering above us, dark, sinister even with its lanterns, like a ladder of light for several almost upright blocks. It took the part of a third person in our talk, one who knew most.

The dog-howl whistle of one of our men-of-war pierced the air. I thought of the erect bearing of Volokhoff and Stroganoff. "Is there a Russian man-of-war in port?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "nor any Russian vessel."

The hill loomed nearer, higher, the street-lights wavered, as if the wisest one of our trio drew

breath. We turned up Mason street, for I must skirt the steep hill.

"There are no strange Russian sailors here now."

"Would you be sure to know?"

"Certain; they do nothing new without burning a taper before a saint in church."

We crossed Broadway, and a few steps southward paused and looked back. I was to call here for my friends who were going to stay with me.

"Come to the church, tomorrow," he said, "and I will give you a *moleben*."

"What is that?"

"Prayer, chant, and the burning of incense; a service of thanksgiving to your guardian angel. You had a night-watch to keep you."

Even in the dimness I could see that sudden look of youth still wrapping him like a mantle.

Aloft—over tightly packed roofs, rising high, crowding north and west above the Spanish church—the last street light of the great hill flared as if out of the sky. From our almost diagonal view across the block there looked no road to what seemed a friendly sign from hidden guard.

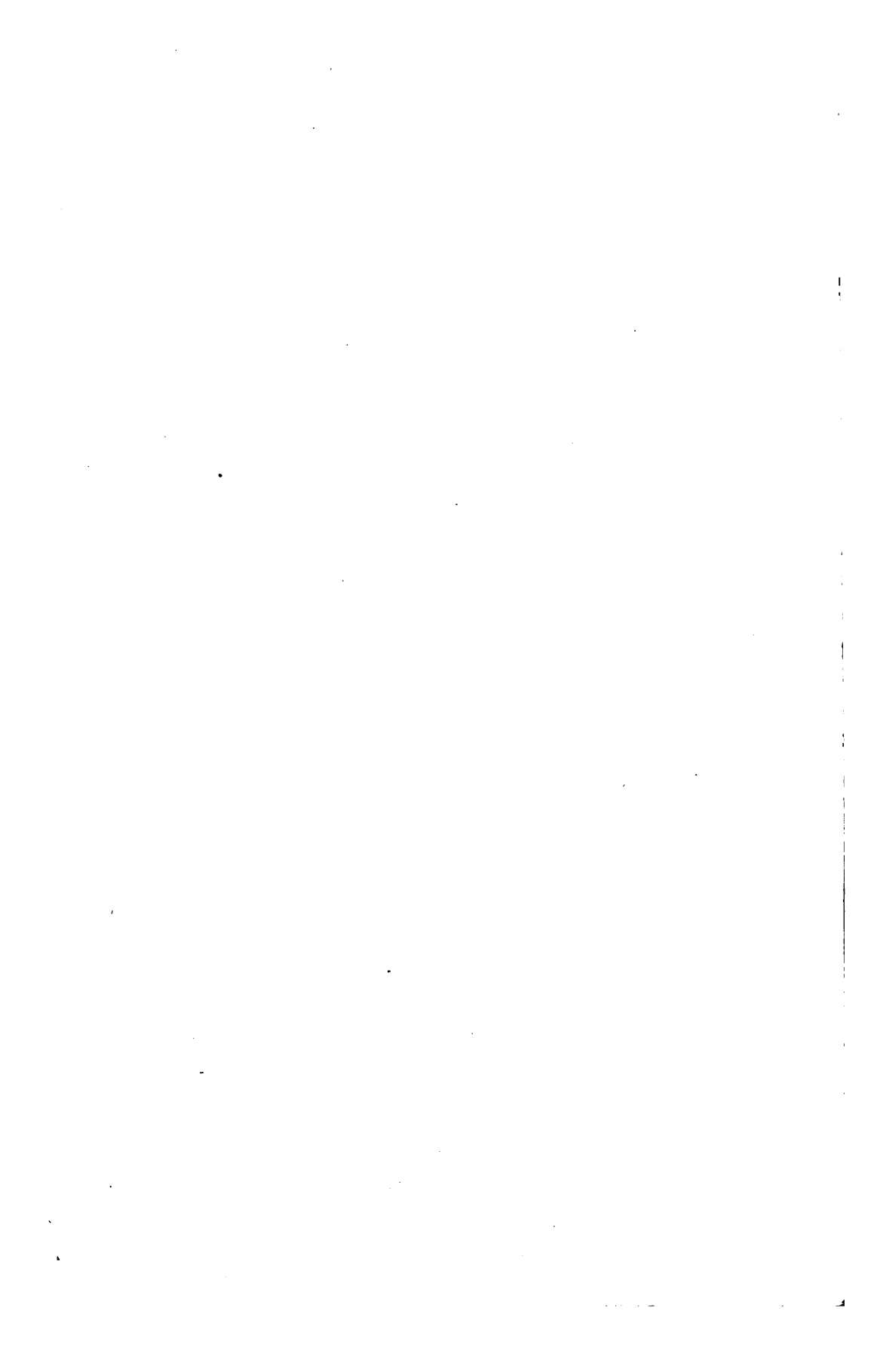
I asked what I had not before thought of: "Why do they call it Russian Hill?"

"Oh! you have not been here long; you do not know!" he replied. His right hand was on his breast. I saw the third and little finger draw into the palm, in the Russian sign of the cross. "Years ago—before I fled from the Nerchinsk mines—they buried on that hill five unknown Russian sailors."

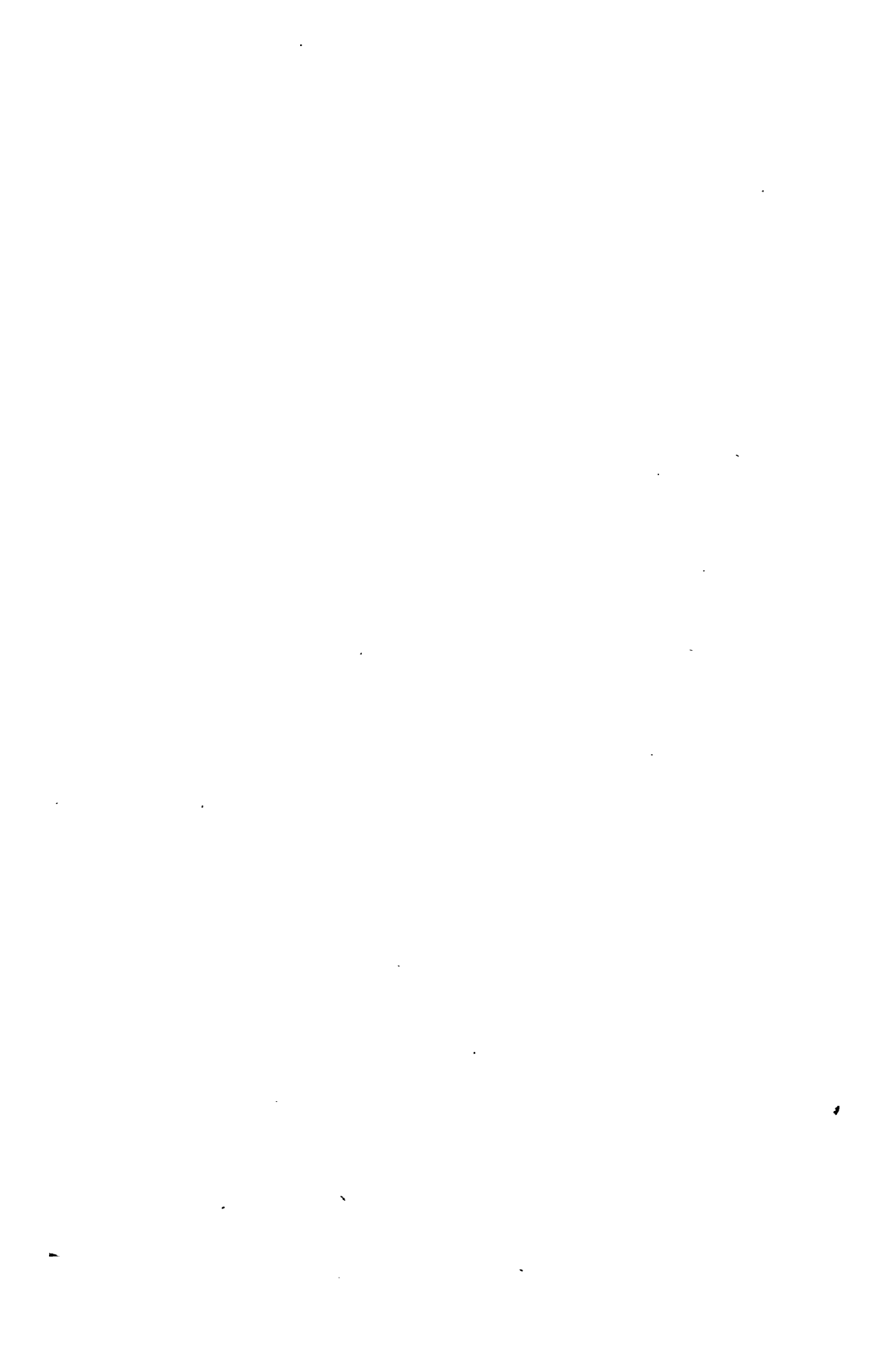
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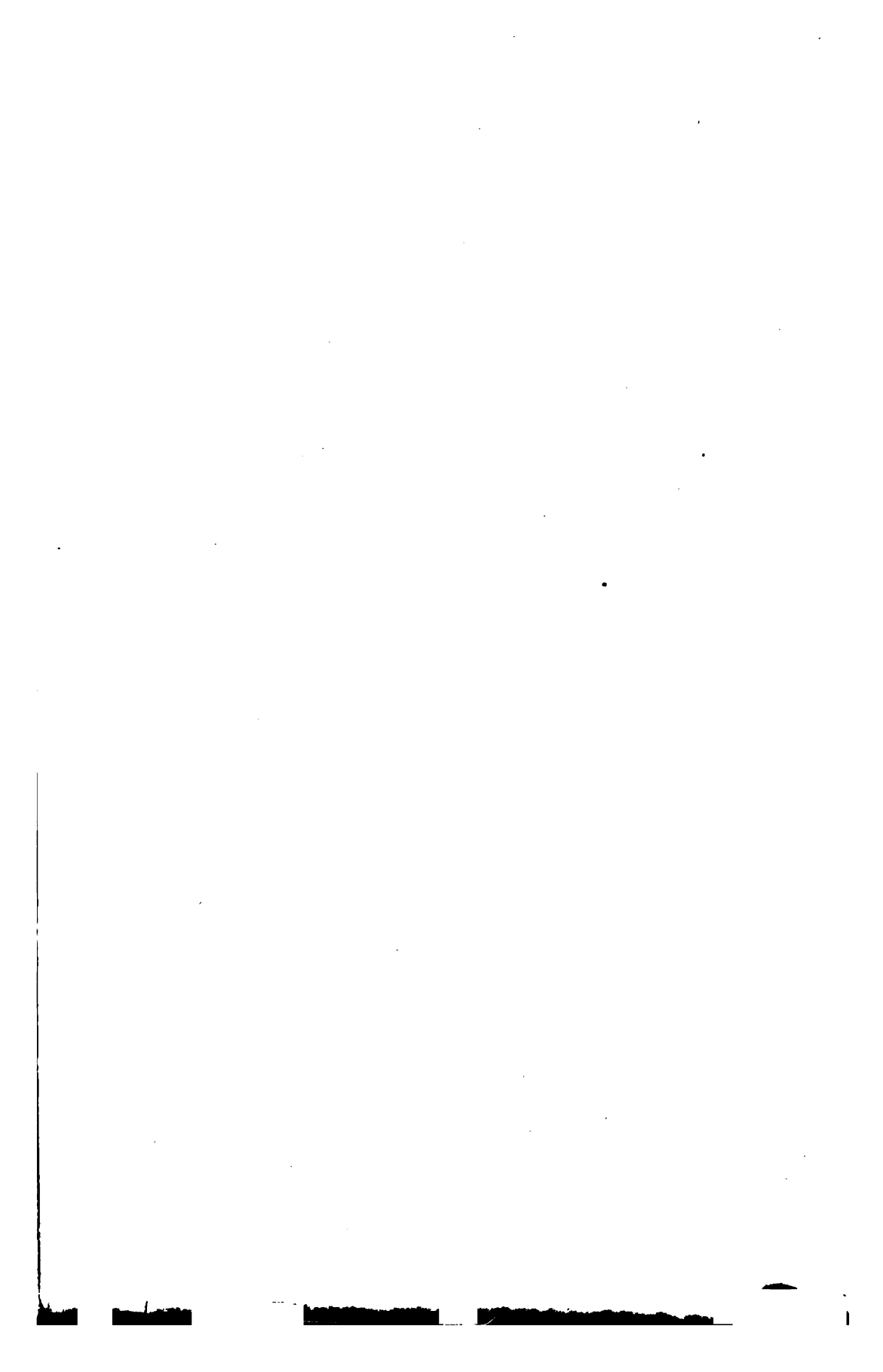
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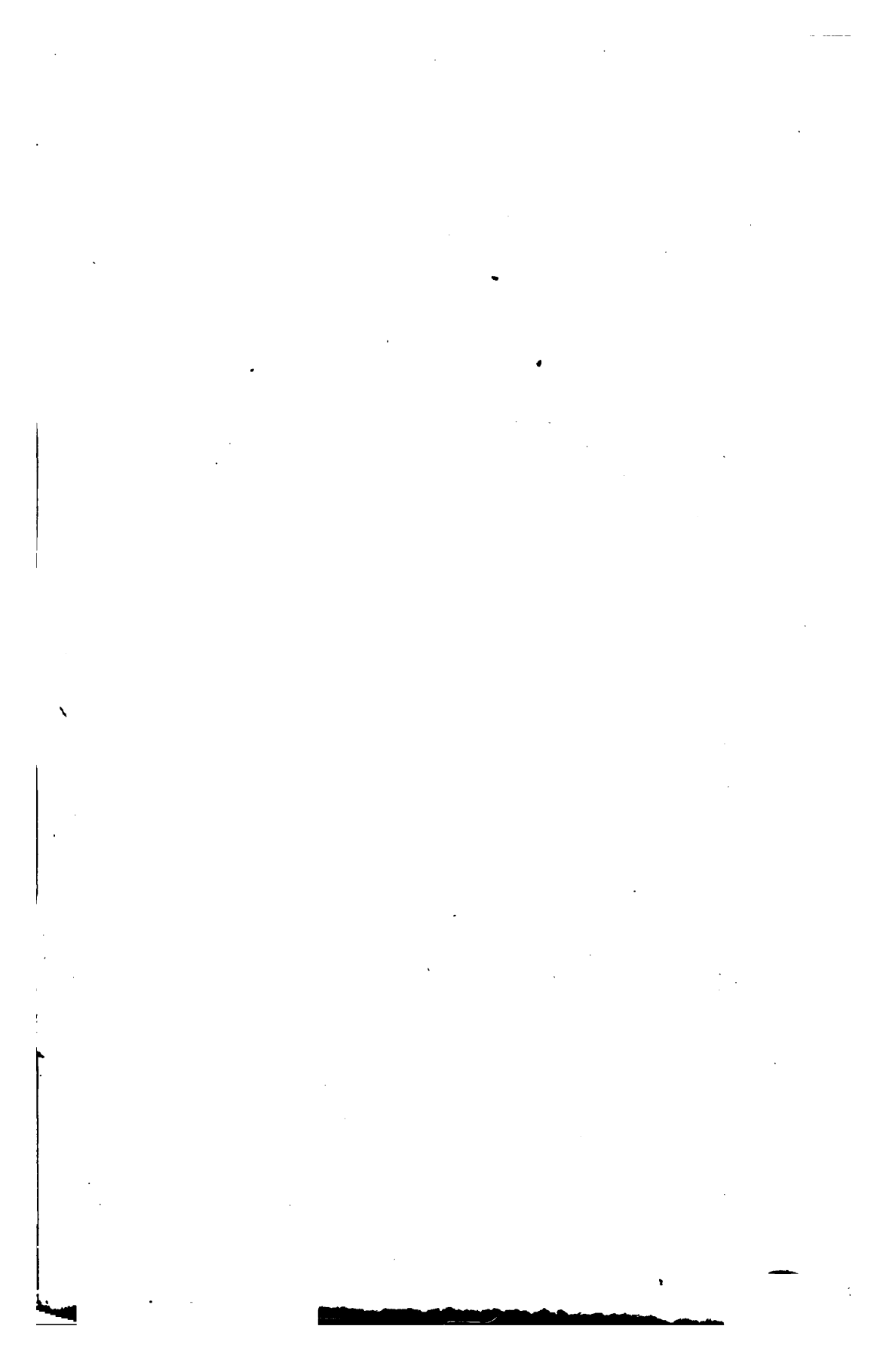












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